

The Wright Report

What is Bethel Church, Redding?

GOT QUESTIONS

1

Pastors Bill and Beni Johnson of Bethel Church (Redding, California) are firmly within the New Apostolic Reformation movement ([NAR](#)). The Bethel Church can be characterized as promoting [Word of Faith](#) teaching, the [prosperity gospel](#), and [Christian dominionism](#). Some aberrant practices, such as “grave soaking” or “[grave sucking](#),” have also come out of the ministry of Bethel Redding.

Bethel Redding has also become associated with certain phenomena that are interpreted by the leadership and the congregation as manifesting the presence and glory of God. The phenomena include the appearance of “[glory clouds](#)” and gold dust and “angel feathers” falling from the ceiling (or perhaps from the ventilation system). The “angel feathers” are easy to critique. Nowhere does the Bible say that angels have feathers. Rather, angels are spiritual beings and most often appear as men. Likewise, in the Bible, whenever the glory of God was manifest, the universal human response was fear and conviction (see Isaiah 6). The response of those in the Bethel movement is usually wonder mixed with excitement, dancing, and recording it with cell phone cameras. The appearance of gold dust and feathers is affirmed by Bill Johnson to be a true manifestation of God’s presence (<https://youtu.be/tcPkOR4Lwj0> , accessed 2/20/24). But if gold glitter and feathers are being placed in the ventilation system for release at strategic moments, then there is deep deception taking place within that church.

A bigger problem is the theology of the Bethel Church and Bill and Beni Johnson, who were influenced by the likes of John Wimber and the false teachers of the [Toronto Blessing](#). Consistent with others in the New Apostolic Reformation, Johnson teaches that people today are receiving direct words from God and that the offices of apostle and prophet have been restored to the church. In this way, Johnson presents a low view of Scripture: the Bible must be either incomplete or insufficient, if we must keep adding to it with the words of modern-day prophets.

At Bethel Church, healing and deliverance are the evidence of “real” gospel ministry. There must be demonstrations of power. Bethel teaches that humans can speak things into existence by faith or even command God to speak them into existence. According to Bethel, physical healing was purchased in the atonement of Christ, and God’s will is always to heal. From Bill Johnson: “How can God choose not to heal someone when He already purchased their healing? . . . Were the stripes He bore only for certain illnesses,

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or certain seasons of time? When He bore stripes in His body He made a payment for our miracle. He already decided to heal. You can't decide not to buy something after you've already bought it. . . . There are no deficiencies on His end. . . . All lack is on our end of the equation" (quoted by Carter, J., "9 Things You Should Know About the Bethel Church Movement," 9/29/18, www.thegospelcoalition.org, accessed 2/20/24). In this view, Christians, when asking for healing, should not say, "If it is Your will," because by faith we already know that it is His will to heal.

2

Bill Johnson also criticizes Christians who rely more on the Bible than on the Holy Spirit. He states that most Christians operate under a false belief that the Trinity is "Father, Son, and Holy Bible," and that "it's difficult to get the same fruit as the early Church when we value a book they didn't have more than the Holy Spirit they did have" (Johnson, Bill and Beni, *Walking in the Supernatural: Another Cup of Spiritual Java*, ch. 26, "Read to Have a God Encounter," Destiny Image Pub., 2012). According to Johnson, what Christians need is not doctrine but the manifest presence of God, and Bethel Redding is committed to seeking and experiencing just that: "Bethel Redding's mission is to create a vibrant family of hope-filled believers who deeply experience the love and presence of God and partner with Jesus to express the joy and power of His kingdom in every area of life" (from the church's official website, accessed 5/13/19).

While there is much on Bethel's website about spiritual experiences, there is little doctrine. Under the "We Believe" heading are the following points of doctrine:

- There is only one true God who is the eternal King, Creator and Redeemer of all that is.
- He is perfectly holy, just, loving and truthful.
- He has revealed Himself to be eternally self-existent—one being in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- The Bible is the inspired and only infallible and authoritative Word of God.

Revival is emphasized on Bethel's website, and there are hints of the gospel there ("We believe Jesus Christ's sacrifice of Himself made grace available that has the power to transform any individual's life"). However, the gospel is never clearly defined. Rather than speak of repentance and faith, there is an emphasis upon an "encounter with Christ," which is understood in physical and emotional terms. In addition to seeking visceral encounters with Jesus, there is a consistent emphasis upon the power that Christians should display, especially in the area of healing. Through the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry, Bethel Redding conducts training on how to begin a "lifestyle of healing and miracles."

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At the very least, we can conclude that Bill Johnson and Bethel Redding omit discussion of vitally important issues at the heart of the gospel and elevate other issues to a place they do not deserve. In the process, they teach some things that are biblically inaccurate. “I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who . . . put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them” (Romans 16:17).

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<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bethel-Church-Redding.html>

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